(b) The staff is to be transferred to the new Zones by taking options. Enough number of staff is expected to register their willingness for transfer to the new Zones for meeting the requirements. Number of staff required to be transferred will be according to the number of posts commensurate with the workload.

Gauge conversion of rail lines

2613. SHRI DWIJENDRA NATH SHARMAH: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) the present status of gauge conversion of existing rail lines in the country; particularly in the NER;

(b) the details of those conversion works, running behind the schedule and the reasons therefor; and

(c) the necessary steps being taken by Government in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI BANDARU DATTATRAYA): (a) Under Project Uni-gauge, gauge conversion of 9000 km of MG / NG lines has been done up to 31.3.2002. Further, gauge conversion of about 8500 km is in progress. On N.E. Railway, gauge conversion of 1137 km. of MG/NG lines has been done upto 31.3.2002. Further gauge conversion of 1543 km is in progress out of existing 2757 km of MG lines.

(b) Keeping in view the overall availability of resources, the targets are fixed on yearly basis. The works are being progressed and completed as per these targets.

(c) Additional funds have been generated through participation of State Governments, beneficiaries and other sources. This will provide additional resources to speed up the works.

Railway Policy

2614. SHRI SUKHDEV SINGH 'LIBRA':
DR. ABRAR AHMED:

Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are seriously considering to lay down a National Railway Policy, in the near future; if so, the details thereof; and

(b) the progress made, so far, in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI BANDARU DATTATRAYA): (a) and (b) IX Five Year Plan document spells out Railways' policy. It envisages the need for strengthening capacity of the Indian Railway system as the prime carrier of long distance bulk freight and passenger traffic. For achieving this objective, Railways will concentrate on multiplexing and electrification of dense corridors, improvement in reliability of operations, containeration of smalls and optimisation of total system operations.

Further Policy framework and strategies conceived in the Plan document are summed as under :

(i) Augment capacity and improve the productivity, which would be the basis for decelerating the decline of the share of Railways and then reversing the present trend.

(ii) A flexible freight policy and better Operational and Commercial Management, aggressive revenue generation, rigorous cost control.

(iii) Rationalization of Freight and Fares—Keeping subsidies at minimum—sufficient flexibility in freight rates to deal with market fluctuations as well as in the Fares to deal with the demand during peak season.

(iv) Reprioritise all project portfolios and early completion of on-going works by scrapping unviable projects.

(v) Improvement in the productivity of the Assets and reducing the instance of asset failures—rigrous cost control and proper inventory management to improve the productivity of assets.

(vi) Better Safety standards by means of modern equipments.

(vii) The role of Private sector should be encouraged in investments in Railway infrastructure, Terminal operations and marketing of special freight trains.

The above policy framework continue to be the focus of Railway Planning. Railway Policy during the Xth Plan period is in the process of approvals.